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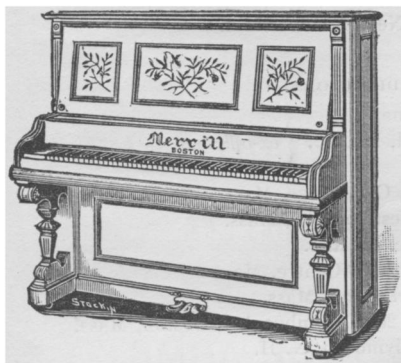
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VOL. LVI.

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No. 8.

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VOL. LVI.

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No. 8.

THE AMERICAN PEACE SOCIETY,
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THE DUTY OF THE CHURCHES.

BY FREDERIC PASSY.

Translated from *La Conférence Interparlementaire*.

Some time ago, it was the evening of Whit-Sunday, I went to hear a preacher whose merits I had heard highly spoken of. Who was this preacher and from what pulpit did he speak? I prefer not to say, and you shall see why.

He spoke, of course, of the solemnity of the day. He dwelt upon that outpouring of the Spirit which it recalls and pointed out with great elevation of thought and language the progress which has been made in the morality and conduct of civilized peoples since the first Pentecost.

He also pointed out, alas! the incompleteness of this progress and alluded, with as much energy as impartiality, to the gaps which still disfigure the present and which the future, let us hope, will be able to fill up. With growing fervor he emphasized, especially, the often mon-

strous contradictions to which custom causes us too easily to be resigned.

"What a contrast," he said, "between what nations demand of their individual citizens and what they permit themselves to do! To prevent or to repress individual misdeeds, to prosecute or to punish the attempts made by the least of the citizens on the property or the life of one of his fellows, the whole machinery of the law is set into operation and the entire public force is called into action. And this same machinery, this same public force is constantly employed, not only without scruple but with pride, in making preparation for, organizing and carrying out, in the name of each nation as against others, enterprises the most odious and attempts the most frightful against their fortunes, their liberties and even their very existence. Murder and theft, between man and man, are detested and punished as crimes; between nation and nation, they are permitted, glorified and blessed."

I applauded from the bottom of my heart this noble and truly religious language. And I asked myself, not without sadness and a little indignation perhaps, why it is so rare; why, though doubtless sometimes uttered within the closed doors and the sacred precincts of places of worship, it is so rarely heard echoing outside; why, to be perfectly frank, the ministers of different communions, Catholic, Protestant, Israelitish, not only figure in such small numbers in the ranks of the Societies whose aim, in the two worlds, is to combat war and to spread about them the spirit of international respect and justice, but even seem the greater part of the time purposely to hold aloof from them and to check rather than to encourage, in those whom they seek to influence, a disposition favorable to the work. Is there not, then, beyond the different forms in which is manifested this love of God and of one's neighbor which, as has been so justly said, are only one and the same thing, this love itself? And is the reproach true which is cast upon them by their enemies, that through envy of each other those whose mission it is to teach men the duties imposed upon them by their original brotherhood busy themselves with what divides them more than with what unites them and sacrifice at pleasure the chief thing to that which is merely accessory and the substance to mere appearance?

These were my reflections; and, at the same time, as